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CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE (formed 1927)

Board of Education.

Consultative Committee.

Summary of Oral Evidence given on behalf of the
Parents' National Educational Union on 23rd June, 1927 by:-
Mr. H.M. Household, Director of Education for Gloucestershire.
Hon. Mrs. Franklin, Hon. Secretary of the P.N.E.U.

[N.B. This summary should be read in conjunction with the
attached Memorandum by Mr. Household and Miss E. Kitching]

General Features of P.N.E.U. Scheme.

The witnesses said that the P.N.E.U. Scheme ~~gave~~ ^{afforded} opportunity for the child to educate itself. The child commenced attending school "bubbling with questions", but these under the ordinary educational system were suppressed. Children had no hesitation in asking questions. There was ^{very little direct} ~~no~~ oral teaching under the system, but the teacher assisted the pupil when and where help was needed. Narration took place after the first reading. As a result of narration it was possible to detect omissions, and the teacher would explain these. No interruption was made in incorrect narration. It was most undesirable to break the spell of concentration. The teacher would of course correct afterwards in the case of incorrect narration, but in many instances it had been found that the pupils corrected themselves. In the case of narration by writing the teachers faced a heavy task. Meticulous accuracy was not however insisted upon; all that was required was evidence of general progression. ^{Conspicuous} ~~were not encouraged~~ ^{would be dealt with as they see fit}
Programmes of Work. Teachers ~~were encouraged~~ ^{to devise their own}
programmes of work, ^{rather than take ready-made ones}. It was ^{thought competent teachers would, as a matter of fact, do so.}

ibpspneut6

in elementary schools
advisable ~~however~~ in the case of teachers taking up

P.N.E.U. methods for the first time to work through the prepared programmes ^{at least until the principles of the system are} until the principles of the system ^{the ideas which govern the choice of the books was grasped. Those who selected the books for the programme had the programme understood.} A new programme was used every term ^{and were generally used, but occasional}

Books to suit these programmes were named, ^{variation was not impossible.} but there was ^{no rigid insistence on particular books.}

The programmes ^{Co-ordination between subjects,} were constructed with a view to affiliation i.e. a

particular event ^{or personage} which would one year appear under History ^{literature or Picture study.} might ^{the next year be discerned in Geography.}

The witnesses stated that the pupils responded educationally to the "joy of recognition."

Teachers and P.N.E.U. System. In P.N.E.U. Schools it had been found that the best teacher obtained the best result, but, owing to the ^{character} of the system, even a poor teacher could not ^{fail to get} prevent some progressive result. It was the

function of the teacher to see that as much was extracted from a book as was possible, and not to overteach. Teachers, who first took ^{up} the P.N.E.U. system ^{even some degree of} with prejudice, usually

became enthusiastic supporters ^{after a short period, particularly if they make a study of C.M. Mason's book on education.}

Books and the P.N.E.U. System. Books were not specially written for the P.N.E.U. The witnesses stated that there

^{as} ~~was~~ a sufficient supply of books for their needs. "Readers" were excluded. It was said that all children enjoyed

History - both English ^{and Ancient} and Foreign. The following histories were mentioned as being ^{satisfactory}:- ^{Our Island Story (Marshall)} Arnold Forster,

Gardner and the ^{Story of} St. Paul's Cathedral and ^{Westminster} Abbey. The teaching of Arithmetic and Mathematics ^{could} not

usually take a literary form, but there was a book entitled "Story of Numbers" ^{"Number Stories of Long Ago" by D.E. Smith that was used.}

Costs. The witnesses stated that the P.N.E.U. System needed more books than the ordinary system, but the additional cost

about 1/6
 did not work out at more than ~~1/6~~ per head per year. The
 allowance in Gloucestershire was 6/- per head throughout the
 school for books, stationery and teachers' library.

The expenditure on Books + Stationery in Gloucestershire
 for the year 1926-27 was as follows: -

	Average Attendance	Expenditure	Cost (per head) s. d.
P.N.C.U. Schools	22788	£5598	5. 0
Other Schools	13278	£2215	3. 4

26p4pneu76

Paper No. R - 10 (26)(1).

MEMORANDUM ON THE SELECTION AND PROVISION OF BOOKS
FOR PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS BY MISS E. KITCHING,
HOUSE OF EDUCATION, AMBLESIDE.

~~(Miss Kitching will give out evidence on behalf of the D.N.E.U.~~
~~on 23 June at 11.30 a.m.).~~

For what reasons should books be selected for schools?
The reasons must spring from certain principles, and the principles are the outcome of ideas which are considered as likely to further the cause of education. The principles which govern the trend of thought in education may be in the main psychological or they may be philosophical.

A book chosen on psychological principles has to show how it may be made a means of (a), giving the child necessary information, (b), testing his mental capacity, (c), exercising his powers of ingenuity, (d), preparing him for further tests in the way of examinations. It must, further, be of use in summarising the oral lessons which the trained teacher will give - a teacher trained in psychological methods.

A book chosen on philosophical principles - (a), brings a child at once in touch with knowledge, (b), gives him food for his mind to grow upon, (c), frees the teacher from oral teaching and enables him to get into touch with the child and his needs rather than to consider the lesson and its result, (d), prepares the child for life by putting him in touch with life and knowledge and in many directions from his earliest years. A teacher chosen for work on these lines needs a different training - one on philosophical lines.

The objections brought against the use of this second type of book are:-

- (a) that the tendency is for the child's knowledge to become too general.
- (b) that a child ought to learn in order to know (according to Miss Mason's Method he should learn in order that his mind may grow).
- (c) that the teacher's own work cannot be estimated by an Inspector.
- (d) that the child gets no preparation for vocational work.

These objections can be met:-

- (a) by providing the child with his own books and seeing that he knows as a result of his own work on the books (by the test of narration and in other ways), also that he makes use of his knowledge in connection with questions of the day, and in out-door observation, by allowing that (b) growth in knowledge is a spiritual growth which is not evident at any given minute, but is only evident after a lapse of time.
- (c) that the teacher's work must be judged by the life and intelligence shown by the children - not by her powers as a giver of oral lessons,
- (d) that preparation for vocational work is not necessary. A liberal education is due to everyone. The youth or girl with mind alive and full of interests is able to tackle vocational work with vigour and without previous preparation. (The Great War showed that this could be allowed.)

Following Miss Mason's philosophy, i.e., her Method, in this important matter of the selection of books as in all other things, we find that the selection should be governed by philosophical rather than by psychological principles.

From time to time lists of books, drawn up by experts, appear, but these seem for the most part to be influenced by psychological rather than by philosophical considerations; e.g., there are questions of correlation, the necessity for self-expression, for the latest information, for oral work, the object of meeting some special need for some special school - a small school in an industrial district, a country school in an agricultural district, a large town school, etc.. Where some attempt has been made to provide a list which may be useful in many kinds of schools, the selection seems to be made on the assumption that children are at least two years behind, in mental grip, what we find them to be in P.N.E.U. schools. This does not mean that we cater for clever children, but only that we believe in children being mentally fed from their earliest years.

In the P.N.E.U. schools children use the best books before they can read, and their actual work is not limited by what they can read. Our P.U.S. Examiners are inclined to think that children in the Public Elementary Schools are sacrificed occasionally to the mechanical arts of reading and writing, and that therefore they do not get as much as children who learn to read and write at a later age: on the other hand we find the P.E. children more "hungry".

We have been told by Miss Mason that "knowledge is passed like a torch from mind to mind", but very few of the modern books published for schools deal with knowledge at all. They are compilations of information, accurate and up-to-date, but they wake no stir in the mind of the reader. As long as the teachers are trained to teach, publishers will find it profitable to issue such books. The teaching habit is almost ineradicable, and in a good many cases all that is required of the books is that it should furnish pictorial illustrations for the teacher's talk. A teacher in a country school in Wales

267pneu76

explained that she was entirely dependent in her choice of books on the commercial travellers who came round, and that she always chose a book with nice pictures; it had not occurred to her to consider the letterpress.

Again, Miss Mason tells us that a child must "grip where he alights" in any subject, and therefore he must have something to grip, and with all the multiplicity of books that are poured out from the press every day, large numbers make no attempt to give any grip upon the subject in hand. Only in this last week or two several books have appeared, that are rather like cages of birds each hopping from perch to perch, e.g. - Geography books in which chapters are taken from books of travel, and strung together without cohesion. We have been going through a phase of purely scientific Geography during the last ten or fifteen years but teachers are coming to see that the study of such statistical Geography bears very little fruit. A hundred years ago our mothers and fathers were very much better educated on real books of travel.

History books, full of delightful illustrations, lay stress on social or economic or political or biographical history, a sense of cohesion being given artificially by a time chart, but with no evidence that the writer is doing more than taking a very one-sided view of the subject himself. History is the pivot on which all the work should turn, and children from 9 upwards should be doing Bible history, English, European and Ancient history, not in ordinary text-books, but in the best-written books than can be found, suitable for their ages.

As regards Citizenship, we teach it indirectly in lives of great men (Plutarch's "Lives", for example), and directly as regards Imperial and Local Government.

Books on Physical Science are changing in their tendency rapidly, and much effort is being made now to relate the scientific principle underlying the experiment to its place

in history, and to the thinker who gave it utterance; but these books are again rather of the nature of a popular magazine than of a real book. In some cases they are simply broadcast Talks published in book form, and they often leave much to be desired, even in the way of grammatical English. In the scientific books, children should have a solid foundation of scientific principles, and be put into touch with all that they can see in the world around them. For the younger children Science teaching should come under the heading of Nature Study in many branches, and as a matter of fact our children get a very good elementary knowledge of biology, astronomy, physical geography, botany and some elementary physics. Here again modern text-books are a difficulty because they deal with facts clothed in the very scantiest of language, and we find that books written 30 or 40 years ago have a greater power of stirring the imagination in many of these subjects; we are using now one or two books on recent developments in science which are really well written, and one or two of the old ones have been brought up to date by able modern writers.

Perhaps if we had a good definition of what a book really is, we should have some definite standard to go by, and we should be able to draw up a White List and relegate to a Black List the thousands of books which will not live because they are purely synthetic. A book that is a real book is inevitable. The author had to write it, just as an artist has to paint a picture, or a poet to make a poem, simply because it bursts forth from a rich and fertile mind like a beautiful growth, and though such books are considered as classics, the same idea should be applied as a test to the books provided for school education. A large number of these must be English classics, and in this connection it is to be regretted that the number of plain texts is so small. The majority of the editions contain text and notes in the proportion of about one-third text to two-thirds notes, questionnaire, etc..

A real book on any subject touches life at many points. "Correlation" with other subjects is natural, - or, just as we say in daily life, "What a strange coincidence!". The vitalising touch of a true relationship in such a book comes as a discovery to the reader, and is not kept as a surprise by the writer or the teacher in the form of a pre-arranged correlation. The relations between geography and history, history and citizenship, art and citizenship, for example, will be discovered by one person here and another there in the reading of real books upon each of these subjects. Miss Mason avoided books that were written for mainly utilitarian purposes. A book should record the discovery of knowledge by the mind of the writer, not just afford information towards a definite end, or be made the means of collecting information (like the edited Plays of Shakespeare); it is this which makes copious notes as signposts necessary.

All this is only preliminary to the whole question of the provision of books, which must be liberal and varied. The more wisely fed a child's body, the better is he fitted for life, and the same applies to the mind.

In conclusion, continuity is secured by working steadily through considerable books which last two, three or sometimes four years, and the child is safeguarded against the disadvantages connected with (1) change of teacher, (2) "gaps" in his work because the P.U.S. books are set on continuous programmes of work which are a complete whole as regards each Form, and also as regards the whole course of a child's education from six to eighteen. But even were all the schools provided with good books, "a liberal education" is still far to seek unless the teacher, guided by Philosophy, makes way for knowledge and the child to meet.

MEMORANDUM ON THE SELECTION AND PROVISION OF BOOKS
FOR PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS BY MR. H.W. HOUSEHOLD,
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION FOR GLOUCESTERSHIRE.

~~(Mr. Household will give out evidence on behalf of the P.N.E.U. on Thursday, 23 June at 11.30 a.m.).~~

What is to be their purpose? Is it to tickle interest to provide reading material for the purpose of achieving mechanical proficiency in reading and a liking for books, or is it to impart knowledge?

The P.N.E.U. following Charlotte Mason set their faces against the use of text-books which for many years have done incalculable harm in every type of School, killing the natural desire to learn with which all children start in life. The text-book sets out with a determination to impose a particular sort of prepared mental food on the child. It is written for the child by somebody who has a purpose quite different from the purpose of those who write books. It is to meet the demands of some examination syllabus; to present in a predigested shape gobbets of information with which the teacher-writer thinks minds must be crammed; to dress up knowledge in a shape which conforms with his conception - a wholly derogatory conception - of the child mind and its tastes and powers; to make easy the advance of classes at a class pace along paths surveyed and levelled, wired and sign posted, till all free wandering and adventure are prohibited, and there is no possibility of selection or rejection, no possibility of real joy in reading and getting knowledge.

If books are to do their work, they must be books, written as books in literary English by people who have written for love of a subject, and not in text-book English by teacher book-makers with a class of school children and all sorts of

26p11pneu76

ulterior purposes in view, which have no concern with the writing of books as books. And they must not have been abbreviated, arranged or bowdlerised, by anybody, no matter how distinguished, who lacks faith in the ability of the child to deal with them.

But if one is to advise on the selection and provision of books for P.E. Schools one must begin by settling what the P.E. School child is to learn, in what fields of knowledge he is to be allowed to browse; in other words are you prepared to admit that he can and should learn just what any other children learn, (that the elementary school child is not a separate type) and are you prepared to provide him with the necessary books? If you are, then he is going to be admitted to a syllabus vastly richer than has ever been provided for any elementary schools except those which have adopted the programmes of the P.N.E.U. for we shall no longer be providing him with mere reading material, but putting before him the complete apparatus required for a liberal education. And each book read, and each part of a book, will have its place, considered and determined in relation to the other books and parts of books as they appear term by term in a cycle of some four or five years. They will not be read haphazard.

And if the book is to do its work, and the child to have its chance, there must be a minimum of interference with him and with the book - as little explaining and questioning as may be. The endless talking and questioning of today are the outcome of a method elaborated in order to make possible the conduct of large classes with a minimum of books. Such methods are entirely out of place where there are good books in plenty. And out of place too are the questioning and explaining (orally and in notes) founded on the

assumption that the child must see in the book all that the adult sees, and must be examined rather on notes (printed or oral) about the book than on the book itself. It is assumed that no work can be done without the teacher. No work can be done without the books; but we shall find that a great deal of work can be done without the teacher; indeed that no real work can be done until the wise teacher has learnt to stand aside, and let each child get what he can with such small help as he will ask for or obviously need. If he has not got all that he might have got if he had been a paragon, he has got it for himself by his own effort, and he has many years before him in which to learn to deal with books and dig out knowledge. A teacher who talks and explains and questions himself does a great deal of work - so much that he leaves very little for the child to do, very little effort for him to make except that of memorising. Answering is easy when the teacher has undertaken all the intellectual effort required for presenting information, and arranging questions, in logical sequence.

If these positions are accepted then we can offer our programmes term by term as themselves carefully co-ordinated lists of books prepared and arranged with the purpose of introducing the child to knowledge in the various subjects which he must study if he is to have a liberal education, and from which he will get what he can take - each child his own quantum.

Of course the expense of providing all these books for every child would be considered prohibitive by any local authority today. That difficulty has been overcome by breaking up classes into three or four groups and providing enough copies of any one book for a third or a fourth only of the total numbers. In Gloucestershire it has been found that the programmes can be followed omitting only the foreign

languages for an average cost year by year of 6/2d. per child. In that figure are included the heavy initial cost of the first introduction of the programmes in a considerable number of Schools, (the first year may cost 12/6d. per child) and the cost of renewals and binding.

11 Memo prepared for Consultation Committee of
the P.N.E.U. 17p1pneu76
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But if one is to advise on the selection and provision of books for P.E. Schools one must begin by settling what the P.E. school child is to learn, in what fields of knowledge he is ^{to be} allowed to browse; in other words are you prepared to admit that he can and should learn just what any other children learn, (that the elementary School child is not a separate type) and are you prepared to provide him with the necessary books? If you are, then he is going to be admitted to a syllabus vastly richer than has even been provided for any elementary Schools except those which have adopted the programme of the P.N.E.U. for we shall no longer be providing him with mere reading material, but putting before him the complete apparatus required for a liberal education. And each book read, and each part of a book,

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i7p5pneu76

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27/7/1916

The objections brought against the use of this second type of book are:-

- (a) that the tendency is for the child's knowledge to become too general.
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From time to time lists of books, drawn up by experts, appear, but these seem for the most part to be influenced by psychological rather than by philosophical considerations; e.g., there are questions of correlation, the necessity for self-expression, for the latest information, for rural work, the object of meeting some special need for some special school - a small school in an industrial district, a country school in an agricultural district, a large town school, etc.. Where some attempt has been made to provide a list which may be useful in many kinds of schools, the selection seems to be made on the assumption that children are at least two years behind, in mental grip, what we find them to be in P.N.E.U. schools. This does not mean that we cater for clever children, but only that we believe in children being mentally fed from their earliest years.

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17p9pneu76

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As regards Citizenship, we teach it indirectly in lives of great men (Plutarch's "Lives", for example), and directly as regards Imperial and Local Government.

Books on Physical Science are changing in their tendency rapidly, and much effort is being made now to relate the scientific principle underlying the experiment to its place

in history, and to the thinker who gave it utterance; but these books are again rather of the nature of a popular magazine than of a real book. In some cases they are simply broadcast Talks published in book form, and they often leave much to be desired, even in the way of grammatical English. In the scientific books, children should have a solid foundation of scientific principles, and be put into touch with all that they can see in the world around them. For the younger children Science teaching should come under the heading of Nature Study in many branches, and as a matter of fact our children get a very good elementary knowledge of biology, astronomy, physical geography, botany and some elementary physics. Here again modern text-books are a difficulty because they deal with facts clothed in the very scantiest of language, and we find that books written 30 or 40 years ago have a greater power of stirring the imagination in many of these subjects; we are using now one or two books on recent developments in science which are really well written, and one or two of the old ones have been brought up to date by able modern writers.

Perhaps if we had a good definition of what a book really is, we should have some definite standard to go by, and we should be able to draw up a White List and relegate to a Black List the thousands of books which will not live because they are purely synthetic. A book that is a real book is inevitable. The author had to write it, just as an artist has to paint a picture or a poet to make a poem, simply because it bursts forth from a rich and fertile mind like a beautiful growth, and though such books are considered as classics, the same idea should be applied as a test to the books provided for school education. A large number of these must be English classics, and in this connection it is to be regretted that the number of plain texts is so small. The majority of the editions contain text and notes in the proportion of about one-third text to two-thirds notes, questionnaire, etc..

77pnpneu76

A real book on any subject touches life at many points. "Correlation" with other subjects is natural, - or, just as we say in daily life, "What a strange coincidence!". The vitalising touch of a true relationship in such a book comes as a discovery to the reader, and is not kept as a surprise by the writer or the teacher in the form of a pre-arranged correlation. The relations between geography and history, history and citizenship, art and citizenship, for example, will be discovered by one person here and another there in the reading of real books upon each of these subjects. Miss Mason avoided books that were written for mainly utilitarian purposes. A book should record the discovery of knowledge by the mind of the writer, not just afford information towards a definite end, or be made the means of collecting information (like the edited Plays of Shakespeare); it is this which makes copious notes as signposts necessary.

All this is only preliminary to the whole question of the provision of books, which must be liberal and varied. The more wisely fed a child's body, the better is he fitted for life, and the same applies to the mind.

In conclusion, continuity is secured by working steadily through considerable books which last two, three or sometimes four years, and the child is safeguarded against the disadvantages connected with (1) change of teacher, (2) "gaps" in his work because the P.U.S. books are set on continuous programmes of work which are a complete whole as regards each Form, and also as regards the whole course of a child's education from six to eighteen. But even were all the schools provided with good books, "a liberal education" is still far to seek unless the teacher, guided by Philosophy, makes way for knowledge and the child to meet.

MEMORANDUM ON THE SELECTION AND PROVISION OF BOOKS
FOR PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS BY MR. H.W. HOUSEHOLL
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION FOR GLOUCESTERSHIRE.

(Mr. Household will give out evidence on behalf of the P.N.E.U. on Thursday, 23 June at 11.30 a.m.).

What is to be their purpose? Is it to tickle interest to provide reading material for the purpose of achieving mechanical proficiency in reading and a liking for books, or is it to impart knowledge?

The P.N.E.U. following Charlotte Mason set their faces against the use of text-books which for many years have done incalculable harm in every type of School, killing the natural desire to learn with which all children start in life. The text-book sets out with a determination to impose a particular sort of prepared mental food on the child. It is written for the child by somebody who has a purpose quite different from the purpose of those who write books. It is to meet the demands of some examination syllabus; to present in a predigested shape gobbets of information with which the teacher-writer thinks minds must be crammed; to dress up knowledge in a shape which conforms with his conception - a wholly derogatory conception - of the child mind and its tastes and powers; to make easy the advance of classes at a class pace along paths surveyed and levelled, wired and sign posted, till all free wandering and adventure are prohibited, and there is no possibility of selection or rejection, no possibility of real joy in reading and getting knowledge.

If books are to do their work, they must be books, written as books in literary English by people who have written for love of a subject, and not in text-book English by teacher book-makers with a class of school children and all sorts of

27p13pneu76

ulterior purposes in view, which have no concern with the writing of books as books. And they must not have been abbreviated, arranged or bowdlerised, by anybody, no matter how distinguished, who lacks faith in the ability of the child to deal with them.

But if one is to advise on the selection and provision of books for P.E. Schools one must begin by settling what the P.E. School child is to learn, in what fields of knowledge he is to be allowed to browse; in other words are you prepared to admit that he can and should learn just what any other children learn, (that the elementary school child is not a separate type) and are you prepared to provide him with the necessary books? If you are, then he is going to be admitted to a syllabus vastly richer than has ever been provided for any elementary schools except those which have adopted the programmes of the P.N.E.U. for we shall no longer be providing him with mere reading material, but putting before him the complete apparatus required for a liberal education. And each book read, and each part of a book, will have its place, considered and determined in relation to the other books and parts of books as they appear term by term in a cycle of some four or five years. They will not be read haphazard.

And if the book is to do its work, and the child to have its chance, there must be a minimum of interference with him and with the book - as little explaining and questioning as may be. The endless talking and questioning of today are the outcome of a method elaborated in order to make possible the conduct of large classes with a minimum of books. Such methods are entirely out of place where there are good books in plenty. And out of place too are the questioning and explaining (orally and in notes) founded on the

assumption that the child must see in the book all that the adult sees, and must be examined rather on notes (printed or oral) about the book than on the book itself. It is assumed that no work can be done without the teacher. No work can be done without the books; but we shall find that a great deal of work can be done without the teacher; indeed that no real work can be done until the wise teacher has learnt to stand aside, and let each child get what he can with such small help as he will ask for or obviously need. If he has not got all that he might have got if he had been a paragon, he has got it for himself by his own effort, and he has many years before him in which to learn to deal with books and dig out knowledge. A teacher who talks and explains and questions himself does a great deal of work - so much that he leaves very little for the child to do, very little effort for him to make except that of memorising. Answering is easy when the teacher has undertaken all the intellectual effort required for presenting information, and arranging questions, in logical sequence.

If these positions are accepted then we can offer our programmes term by term as themselves carefully co-ordinated lists of books prepared and arranged with the purpose of introducing the child to knowledge in the various subjects which he must study if he is to have a liberal education, and from which he will get what he can take - each child his own quantum.

Of course the expense of providing all these books for every child would be considered prohibitive by any local authority today. That difficulty has been overcome by breaking up classes into three or four groups and providing enough copies of any one book for a third or a fourth only of the total numbers. In Gloucestershire it has been found that the programmes can be followed omitting only the foreign

languages for an average cost year by year of 6/2d. per child. In that figure are included the heavy initial cost of the first introduction of the programmes in a considerable number of Schools, (the first year may cost 12/6d. per child) and the cost of renewals and binding.